Vol. VI. Numb. 86

THE OBSERVATOR.

Propoſals for a Fund to relieve our Sea-mens Widows and Children, farther diſcours'd. A Letter, complaining that our Sea-men, when brought over from France, *are forc'd to beg their Way Home. Some Books fit to be read by our Parliament-men*, &c. *The* Obſervator's *Reaſons for referring ſo much to the Parliament.*

From **Wednesday**, December 24. to **Saturday**, December 27. 1707.

Country-m. OUR laſt concluded, Maſter, with ſome Reaſons why the Captains and other Commiſſion-Officers on Board our Fleet, ſhould deduct ſomething annually out of their Pay, towards a Fund for the Relief of the poor Widows and Children of Sea-men that loſe their Lives in the Nation's Service; and I have one more to add, which is, That the Captains, who acquire Reputation on Board the Navy, obtain it by the Valour and Blood of our Sea-men, as well as by their own; and therefore are oblig'd in Gratitude to agree to it, ſince they themſelves are provided for by Penſions, when made unfit for Service; and their Widows and Children have the Benefit of the Nation's Bounty, out of the Eſtimate of the Fleet, when the Captains die in the Service of the Crown.

Obſ. You ſay very well, *Roger*; and I think, beſides what can be ſpar'd from that which is ſettl'd for the Relief of the Widows and Children of ſuch as die in the Service of the Crown, the Commanders and other Officers of Merchant-men, ſhould likewiſe deduct ſomething out of their Pay, for the poor Widows and Children of ſuch as die in the Merchants Service: That thoſe alſo, who build, equip, and victual for the Merchants, ſhould allow ſome ſmall Matter out of their Bills, towards ſuch a Fund; and I doubt not, but our Merchants and Traders would allow ſomething upon every Sale of their Cargo, to ſuch a charitable Uſe.

Country-m. A very good Motion, Maſter. I am of Opinion, conſidering what vaſt Numbers of Ships belong to this Iſland, that Contributions of the Nature above-mention'd, together with the Rents of the Cheſt of *Chatham* and *Greenwich*-Hoſpital, might not only provide handſomely for our diſabl'd Sea-men, and the poor Widows and Children of ſuch as die in the Service of the Crown or Merchant, but would likewiſe be a Fund for the Relief of ſuch Merchants and Traders as happen to be utterly ruin'd by Captures, and other Loſſes at Sea.

Obſ. I am of your Mind, *Roger*; and ſo much the more, that we have Ground to believe, the Cheſt of *Chatham* had 3000 Pounds *per An.* in free Lands ſome Years ago, which is a very great Revenue, if honeſtly manag'd and diſpos'd of; and that Cheſt being founded at firſt on the voluntary Contributions of the Sea-men, is a very good Proof of what a conſiderable Fund might be rais'd by the Contributions above-mention'd. We have likewiſe another Inſtance of a conſiderable Fund rais'd from ſuch a voluntary Deduction, from their Sallaries by the Officers of the Exciſe.

Country-m. Very true, Maſter: And were ſuch a Fund once well ſettl'd, and put into the Hands of honeſt Truſtees, we are not to doubt, but rich Admirals, Captains of Ships, Builders, Riggers, Victuallers of Ships, Merchants and Traders, would be conſiderable Benefactors to it, by Legacies and other Gifts. But if our Superiors think fit to encourage this by a Law, Maſter, I hope they will provide as effectually as the Wiſdom of Man can do, againſt all thoſe Embezzlements and Frauds, ſo often complain'd of, by Officers of Hoſpitals, who cheat the poor Penſioners, and by Commiſſioners of other Sorts, who have miſapply'd ſuch Contributions, which were earn'd by the Hazard of the Lives, and the Sweat of the Faces of the Contributors, and have given it to their own Coach-men, Foot-men, and it may be Pimps.

Obſ. That's but juſt, *Roger*; we have Complaints of that Nature frequently ſent us: But I muſt again and again adviſe the Complainers to lay their Grievances before the two Houſes of Parliament, in order to have them enquir'd into, and redreſs'd, and the Criminals puniſh'd. We find, the Parliament of *Ireland* made Work laſt Seſſion, among thoſe who took Bribes to pay the Subjects the Money that was due to them; and we have no Reaſon to doubt, but the Parliament of *Great Britain* would do the ſame Juſtice to the Inhabitants of this Iſland, upon due Proof of their Complaints. Her Majeſty and the two Houſes are the ſupream Judges of the Nation; and as there's no Subject too Great for them to judge and puniſh, there's no Reaſon to fear ſuch an unjuſt Anſwer from them, as, That *they will hear nothing againſt thoſe Gentlemen.*

It is plain, *Roger*, that the raiſing of ſuch a charitable Fund is practicable, not only from the Inſtances above-mention'd, but from thoſe of ſeveral Clubs of Mechanicks, and other Tradeſmen about Town, who by ſmall voluntary Contributions regularly pay'd, raiſe pretty conſiderable Stocks, by which they are enabl'd to give handſome Allowances to the Sick and Decay'd of their reſpective Societies. And ſince our Sea-men are ſo uſeful a Part of the Nation, that we can neither be ſafe nor rich without them, I wiſh that theſe, or ſome other proper Meaſures were thought on, to provide for ſuch of them as are diſabl'd, and to relieve their Widows and Fatherleſs Children.

Country-m. There was never more Need of it than now, Maſter; for the *Daily-Courant* tells us of ſix more of our Merchant-Ships taken in the *Straits*; and the laſt *Paris Gazette* told us of five others carry'd into *Breſt*; which, as 'tis an Addition to the Loſs of our Merchants and Trade, will no doubt increaſe the Number of our Widows and Fatherleſs. In ſhort, Maſter, our Diſaſters by Sea are ſo many, our Trade ſo low, and our Money ſo ſcarce, that I can't drink a Glaſs of *October*, nor eat a Bit of Gooſe-Pye this *Chriſtmas* Seaſon, with any Comfort; for I cannot but think of the miſerable Condition of the Sea-mens Widows and Children, as well as of many other poor Families, who have loſt their Means of Subſiſtance, by the Decay of Trade, and heartily wiſh I had Beef, Pudding, and *October* enough to entertain them all; upon my Country Word, they ſhould be welcome.

Obſ. I commend your charitable Diſpoſition, *Roger*. Pray what Letters be thoſe in your Hand?

Country-m. This is from a Gentleman that lives in one of our Sea-ports, Maſter, with an Account, That ſome of the Men belonging to the *Hampton-Court*, which was taken in *May* laſt, being lately brought over from *France*, complain'd, that their Tranſportation was delay'd by the Maſters of Merchant-Ships, who give two or three Pounds a-piece for our Men; that now they are come over, they are forc'd to beg 'till they get to their Homes; and

and that ſome of the Country Juſtices are readier to treat them as Vagabonds, and ſell them, than to relieve them.

Obſ. The Hardſhips put upon our poor Sea-men, *Roger*, are ſo many, that 'twould grieve the Heart of any Man, who has a Kindneſs for his Country, to hear of them. One would think, that ſuch Things as that Letter mentions, might eaſily be provided againſt by the Commiſſioners of the Navy reſiding at our Ports, or the Magiſtrates there; and that Money ſhould always be appointed for the Relief of Sea-men in ſuch Caſes, eſpecially during a War, when they are ſo very neceſſary, and many times hard to be gotten. But we muſt leave all thoſe Things to the Conſideration of our Repreſentatives, who I heartily wiſh would each of them carefully read Mr. *Dennis*'s Eſſay on the Navy, dedicated to the Earl of *Pembroke*, and printed in the Year 1702, wherein they may find *an Account of the Hardſhips our poor Sea-men endure, with Propoſals for removing the ſame, for giving them due Encouragement, and for effectually Manning the Navy in a few Days; by which the Government might ſave* 3 *or* 400000 *l.* per Annum *in Time of War*, &c.

Country-m. I am afraid, Maſter, you have forgot to conſider the Book lately publiſh'd, call'd, *An Enquiry into the Cauſes of our Naval Miſcarriages*, &c.

Obſ. No, *Roger*, I ſhall diſpatch that Subject as ſoon as I can: And in the mean Time, would recommend it to the Peruſal of all ſuch as are capable of giving their Country Aſſiſtance in that Matter. I am alſo of Opinion, that a Book tranſlated and printed here in 1702. call'd, *The true Intereſt, and political Maxims of the Republick of* Holland *and* Weſt-Friezland, *writ by* John de Wit, *and other Great Men of that Country*, deſerves the Peruſal of all true *Engliſh*-men. There they will find an Account of the Diſaſters the *Dutch* labour'd under, by the Miſmanagement of their Naval Affairs, and what prudent and ſucceſsful Methods they took to retrieve them.

Country-m. Hold, Maſter; they'll ſay now you are turn'd Hawker, to cry Books about for the Bookſellers.

Obſ. Let 'em ſay what they pleaſe, *Roger*; I mention thoſe Books, becauſe they touch upon one of the principal Griefs of the Nation, and teach how to cure it. I am very well ſatisfy'd, were they carefully perus'd by honeſt Men, whoſe Province it is to enquire into our Naval Miſcarriages, they might be eas'd of a great deal of Trouble, in ſeeking out the Cauſes and Cure of that dangerous Diſtemper, which ſo much affects our Trade and Security. Nor would it be eaſy for ſuch as are inclinable to palliate and skin over the Sore, to effect it, or to prevent the Diſcovery of thoſe, who by Neglect, or otherwiſe, may at any Time contribute to our publick Misfortunes.

Country-m. You refer ſo much to the Parliament, Maſter, that the Under-ſpur-Leathers ſay you are a Republican, or at beſt, an Enemy to the Prerogative.

Obſ. No Doubt, *Roger*. There's nothing would ſooner frighten Madam *Maintenon*, and *Meſſieurs de Chamillard* and *Pontchartrain*, out of their Wits, than to be within Reach of a Parliamentary Enquiry. The Comptroller of the *French* King's Finances, muſt not, if it were ſo, let his Maſter's Money lie by Millions of Livres at a Time, in the Hands of thoſe intruſted with receiving any Branch of the Revenue, that he and they may go Snacks in lending it out, and receiving Intereſt for it, beſides a thouſand other little pretty Tricks, they can now play with Impunity. But prithee tell thoſe Sparks, *Roger*, that are in Love with arbitrary Power, and would have the Subjects of *Great Britain* like thoſe of *Ceylon*, call themſelves *their Sovereign's Dogs*, that God be thank'd, our Conſtitution is otherwiſe; and that when we apply to the Parliament, we apply to the Queen at the ſame Time, if we may believe King *Henry* the VIII: who underſtood and practis'd Prerogative as much as any Prince of his Time; and yet he ſaid in Parliament, in the 34th Year of his Reign, "We are inform'd, by our "Judges, that we, at no Time, ſtand ſo highly in "our Eſtate Royal, as in Time of Parliament, "wherein we as Head, and you as Members, are "conjoin'd and knit together in one Body poli-"tick. *Crompton*'s *Juriſdiction*, Fol. 10.

By this, *Roger*, I think it plain, that thoſe who are for deſtroying, leſſening, garbling, and bribing Parliaments, are Enemies to the Prerogative, and diſmember their Soveraign; whereas thoſe who are for free Parliaments, preſerve the Soveraignty entire.

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